

(Rev. 10-90)  
NPS Form 10-900

OMB No. 1024-0018

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Stonega Historic District  
other names/site number 343

**2. Location**

street & number Located on either side of SR. 600, from 1/10 mile north of its intersection with SR. 685 to a point approximately three miles to the northeast not for publication N/A  
city or town Appalachia vicinity X  
state Virginia code VA county Wise County code need code Zip 24285

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination      request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets      does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant      nationally      statewide X locally. (     See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official Date  
**Virginia Department of Historic Resources**  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property      meets      does not meet the National Register criteria. (     See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby certify that this property is:  
     entered in the National Register  
     See continuation sheet.  
     determined eligible for the  
National Register  
     See continuation sheet.  
     determined not eligible for the National Register

\_\_\_ removed from the National Register  
\_\_\_ other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

## 5. Classification

**Ownership of Property** (Check as many boxes as apply)

☒ private  
\_\_\_ public-local  
\_\_\_ public-State  
\_\_\_ public-Federal

**Category of Property** (Check only one box)

\_\_\_ building(s)  
☒ district  
\_\_\_ site  
\_\_\_ structure  
\_\_\_ object

## Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>80</u>	<u>38</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>80</u>	<u>41</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

## 6. Function or Use

**Historic Functions** (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>DOMESTIC:</u>	Sub: Single Dwelling _____
<u>DOMESTIC:</u>	Multiple Dwelling _____
<u>DOMESTIC:</u>	Secondary Structure _____
<u>INDUSTRY/PROC/EXTR:</u>	Mining Buildings _____
<u>RELIGION:</u>	Religious Facility _____
<u>SOCIAL:</u>	Meeting Hall _____
<u>EDUCATION:</u>	School _____

U. S. Department of the Interior

National Park Service

Stonega Historic District  
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet Wise County, Virginia**Current Functions** (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC: _____	Sub: Single Dwelling _____
_____ DOMESTIC: _____	Multiple Dwelling _____
_____ DOMESTIC: _____	Secondary Structure _____
_____ RELIGION: _____	Religious Facility _____
_____ VACANT _____	Not in Use _____

**7. Description****Architectural Classification** (Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS: Colonial Revival

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Bungalow/Craftsman

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Gothic Revival

**Materials** (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation \_\_\_\_\_ BRICK; STONE; CONCRETE

roof \_\_\_\_\_ ASPHALT

walls \_\_\_\_\_ WOOD: Weatherboard;

\_\_\_\_\_ WOOD: Board and Batten

other \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_**Narrative Description** (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)**8. Statement of Significance****Applicable National Register Criteria** (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations** (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☒ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or a grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object or structure.

☐ F a commemorative property.

☐ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance** (Enter categories from instructions)

☐ ARCHITECTURE \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ INDUSTRY/ PROCESSING/EXTRACTION \_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance** ☐ 1895-1952 \_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates** ☐ 1896 (Town opened) \_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person** (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)  
☐ N/A \_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation** ☐ N/A \_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file** (NPS)

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.  
☐ previously listed in the National Register  
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register  
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark  
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary Location of Additional Data**

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office  
☐ Other State agency  
☐ Federal agency  
☐ Local government  
☐ University  
☐ Other

Name of repository: ☐ Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia \_\_\_\_\_

## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** \_\_\_\_\_ acres \_\_\_\_\_

**UTM References** (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

1 17 538320 4109240 2 17 539820 4110700

3 17 539700 4109820 4 17 538700 4109960

\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

## 11. Form Prepared By

**name/title:** Gibson Worsham, principal

**Organization:** Gibson Worsham, Architect

**street & number:** 3145 Yellow Sulphur Road

**city or town:** Christiansburg

**state:** VA

**date:** February 15, 2002

**telephone:** (540) 552-4730

**zip code:** 24073

## Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

### Continuation Sheets

### Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

### Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

**Additional items** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

### Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

**name** \_\_\_\_\_

**street & number** \_\_\_\_\_ **telephone** \_\_\_\_\_

**city or town** \_\_\_\_\_ **state** \_\_\_\_\_ **zip code** \_\_\_\_\_

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127 and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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## 7. Summary Description:

Stonega, one of the earliest and long-lived of the coal company towns in the mountainous coal fields of Southwest Virginia, was built along the narrow bottomland along Callahan's Creek four miles north of the corporate headquarters and supply centers at Appalachia and Big Stone Gap. Founded in 1896, it spreads along both sides of the road that follows the creek and the railroad track to the head of the valley. The district's surviving built resources are grouped in three clusters: Red Row, an historically black neighborhood of double houses at the upper end of the town, a central section consisting of groups of mostly double houses known as the Park, Quality Row, and Hunktown in the middle of the district, and a section called Midway, a slightly later row of single-family homes near the entrance to the valley.

### *Colony to Early National Period (1753-1830)*

There are no resources in the historic district that date from this period.

### *Antebellum Period (1831-1860)*

There are no resources in the historic district that date from this period.

### *Civil War (1861-1865)*

There are no resources in the historic district that date from this period.

### *Reconstruction and Growth (1866-1916)*

#### Post-War Period (1866-1889)

There are no resources in the historic district that date from this period.

#### Early Company Towns (1890-1916)

Most of the historic resources in the district date from 1895 to 1914. The town consists of \_\_\_ contributing houses, \_\_\_ contributing church, \_\_\_ contributing garages, \_\_\_ coal houses, \_\_\_ contributing bridges, \_\_\_ contributing sites (foundations of demolished buildings), and \_\_\_ noncontributing buildings (modern houses or outbuildings interspersed through the camp).

Stonega today consists of three distinct districts, each separated from the other by an extended area devoid of historic resources. The town is strung out along Callahans Creek between the high sloping walls of Bluff Spur and Ninemile Spur mountains in the Coalfields region of eastern Wise County near the boundary between Virginia and Kentucky. Most of the historic resources in the proposed Stonega Historic District date appear to date from 1895 to about 1915.

The upper end of the community is bounded by a gate prohibiting access to the active mines of the Westmoreland Coal Company, successor to the Stonega Coke and Coal Company. The section known as the Upper End is completely gone, with its store and church. The survey area starts with the upper end of Red Row, the historic black section. Of this section, once home to hundreds of black residents, only seventeen historic structures remain, including the Colored Methodist Church and the Colored School. This two-story frame school building is a rare survival and may be Stonega's most important building. Based on a similar structure in Derby, now gone, it may have been built as a multi-purpose building to provide educational, social, and religious functions to the segregated Red Row community. It is said to have held a school, a dance hall, and, later, a church [Paul Hylton]. The historic Colored Methodist Church has been altered, but continues to serve a religious function for a white congregation. The houses here are similar to many of those in the central section of town: two-story, single-pile (one room deep), four-bay, double houses of board-and-batten frame construction. The houses are located in three rows: along both sides of the road and in a short line on the opposite side of the railroad track. Most of the houses have rear sheds.

Below the Red Row section extends a half-mile section of nearly vacant land that was formerly the site of the coke ovens of the Stonega Coke and Coal Company. The footings of the tippie, foundations of other buildings such as the carpenter shop, and the still standing Bathhouse and Supply Warehouse, both of which date from the 1930s, are all that is immediately visible. This was the industrial heart of the camp and much is intact in the form of subsurface features.

At the foot of the coke oven section stands the social and operations center of the camp. The store, theater, and post office stood on the south side of the road with the hotel and Baptist/Methodist Union Church on the other side. All of these are gone, but the section known as "The Park," home of the senior management and the two company doctors, stands nearly intact on a short spur road off the main thoroughfare. These large, boxy, weatherboard frame houses have

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details adapted from Queen Anne-style pattern books for roof form, and architectural details such as the wide porches. Those on the northeast side of the street that traverses the section are single dwellings and those on the southwest are double houses.

On the south side of the main road stands a long section of related double dwellings, the homes of the middle management of the colliery and their families. Known, perhaps humorously, as "Quality Row," the section is made up of nine two-story, double-pile (or two-room deep) double houses, in which a window and door on each side of a central dividing wall gives access to a separate household and three similar, single-pile double houses. Ridge-top chimneys provided heat from grates placed back-to-back in the dwelling units of the larger houses, while a single central chimney served the small ones. The houses, originally sheathed with board-and batten siding, now are mostly covered with aluminum and vinyl siding. They were provided with wide one-story porches. The houses were originally equipped with one-story shed across the rear, but some have been expanded over time by two-story gabled ells. Where the ell rooms were added to one of the units only it resulted in the incomplete appearance of a high wall along the central spine with a single slope of roof to the outer edge. The smaller units each have wide gabled ells across the rear.

Across the creek and tracks from Quality Row stood "Hunktown," home to the Hungarians and other foreign-born workers. The two-family houses here were similar to the others in the town, in both Red Row and Quality Row, in that they were board-and-batten single-pile structures of two stories with rear shed sections and central chimneys. A single house, much altered, is all that remains of Canal Road, a section downstream from Quality Row on the south side of the road. These house were like those in Hunktown. The original southwestern terminus of the camp, a section known as the "Lower End," has been entirely demolished. A further section, nearly a half mile downstream, was built after the rest of the camp and known as "Midway." These frame one-story houses, built in 1914, were designed for single families and consisted of three rooms, weatherboarded exteriors, and wide porches [Paul Hylton].

### *Modern Company Towns (1917-1952)*

Of the few buildings built after 1917, only two were recorded. These consist of substantial gabled brick structures built near the mines for the use of the company and its employees. The largest building now standing in the community is the ca. 1938 Stonega Bathhouse, a large facility designed to provide changing rooms and showers for the workers coming to and from work. The bathhouse takes the form of a long gable end central structure containing several tall changing rooms, segregated by race and rank, with pulley systems for hoisting clothes and possessions out of reach of others and drying them with shed-roofed side aisles containing the showers and toilets. The roof structure consisted of steel trusses, exposed on the interior. Light was provided by a

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series of glass block windows in the walls and in a clerestory above the side wings. The water for the facility was heated in a large boiler supplied by a tall brick smokestack. The second brick building is a long, low gabled building built about the same time to serve as a supply warehouse for the colliery. Both have American bond brick work and corrugated metal roofs.



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## 8. Statement of Significance

The proposed Stonega Colliery Historic District appears to meet the standards for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A and C as an historic industrial, residential, social, and commercial community exhibiting the early twentieth-century development of the company town. Residential and institutional buildings primarily date from a period of significance from 1895 to 1952, during which time a new, carefully designed, and unusually comfortable company-owned town was built in order to keep and attract coal workers,

using unusual and innovative building forms and materials. The significant date is 1896, the year of the town's construction.

### *Colony to Early National Period (1753-1830)*

There is little information on the immediate locality during this period. Those who owned property in the area were engaged in subsistence farming and other agricultural pursuits. Although coal mined in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, and Indiana fueled much of the Industrial Revolution, the vast coal fields of the southern Appalachians had scarcely been tapped.

### *Antebellum Period (1831-1860)*

Similarly with the previous period, no sites dating from the Antebellum Period were identified within the district boundaries. Coal and its derivative, coke, became increasingly used for iron production and in railroad locomotives. Wise County was formed in 1856, with the county seat at Gladeville (remained Wise in the 1920s). The population consisted of 4,508 people in 1860.

### *Civil War (1861-1865)*

Similarly with the previous period, no sites dating from the Antebellum Period were identified within the district boundaries. The lack of development in the area made it a backwater during this period, unlike other industrial developments, such as the saltworks at Saltville in Smyth County, which were attacked by Union forces several times in an attempt to cripple the South's principal source of salt.

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### *Reconstruction and Growth (1866-1916)*

#### Post-War Period (1866-1889)

The coal potential of the region was recognized soon after the end of the Civil War. Among the earliest promoters of the region were former military figures, who had observed the coal deposits during their service and began to purchase mineral rights through the area in the 1870s. In 1880, former Confederate General John Daniel Imboden purchased 47,000 acres of mineral lands in Wise County. Mine owners from Pennsylvania also purchased large holdings in the county beginning in 1880. One of these, Philadelphia businessman John Leisenring, bought 67,000 acres and called his holdings the Virginia Coal and Iron Company, one of the earliest coal

companies to attempt to exploit the coal. VC&I worked with Imboden to acquire another 25,000 acres.<sup>1</sup> Movement of coal out of the mountainous region was not possible until railroads made transport cheap and quick. All of the promoters and owners agitated to develop railroads. Coal mining in the region is said to have had its start as early as 1866, when a blacksmith, Jordan Nelson operated a shop at what is now Pocahontas, Virginia in Tazewell County and used coal from his large land holdings for fuel. He began selling the coal by the bushel.<sup>2</sup>

In 1873, Captain Isaiah A. Welch was sent by engineer and geologist Jedediah Hotchkiss to explore the area for minerals and timber. His report of the extraordinary seam of coal at Pocahontas came to the attention of railroad investors, who began a drive to reach to Pocahontas with a rail line. This was not achieved until 1883 when the New River Division of the Norfolk and Western Railroad arrived at Pocahontas. Frederick J. Kimball, president of the railroad, was busy purchasing mineral rights for relatively small sums. Coal mining began by the Pocahontas Fuel Company and coke ovens were constructed. When the railroad arrived there were 40,000 tons of coal waiting to be shipped.<sup>3</sup> Many small coal companies opened soon in the coal fields region to utilize the access to markets offered by the railroad. The town of Pocahontas (Pocahontas Historic District) grew up near the mines, with company-built houses and a full complement of commercial and institutional architecture, including rows of ironfront commercial buildings. An elaborate frame company store opened in 1883.

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Early Company Towns (1890-1916)

The Big Stone Gap coalfields are located in a 540 square-mile area near a gap where the Powell River passes through Stone Mountain. The resources of the area were accessible to exploitation until the Virginia Coal and Iron Company itself laid a rail line from Bristol to Big Stone Gap in 1890. Rail lines from the Norfolk and Western Railway from Tazewell and the Louisville and Nashville Railroad from Kentucky both reached nearby Norton the following year. The first carload of coal left Wise County in 1892.<sup>4</sup> Census figures reflect the changes brought by coal mining. The 9,345 people in the county more than doubled to 19,653 in 1900 and 34,162 in 1910. There were fifty manufacturing concerns in the county and twelve mining companies in

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<sup>1</sup> Shifflett 31

<sup>2</sup> Leslie 36

<sup>3</sup> Leslie 42-43

<sup>4</sup> Shifflett 32

1900.<sup>5</sup>

The coal camps in the region usually started out with temporary structures to house the first workers. One of the first buildings to be built was the company store, the principal non-residential building. It usually housed the commissary, where residents could procure the necessities of life, the company offices, and often a medical department. By 1921, an estimated five hundred such coal towns could be found in southern Appalachia.<sup>6</sup> Mature towns included playgrounds, churches, schools, sometimes a theater or amusement hall, and other urban amenities.

The sites of the mines were located far from existing supply centers and roads. In order to make it possible to house the workers and management needed to extract the coal the companies found it necessary to provide the minimal services such as food, shelter, and entertainment. Small tarpaper shanties such as those that grew up along the railroad tracks are said to have been used by the largely male early populations of the camps. Dry goods and food were available at company stores or commissaries in each community. Saloons provided off-hours recreation. While some company towns were operated by smaller companies near their main mines, other camps were gradually developed through a region by a large company in the process of exploiting a large array of resources.

The Virginia Iron and Coal Company opened a camp, called a “colliery,” called Pioneer in 1896. Work began in 1895 on the buildings and infrastructure. This original camp was later renamed Stonega and eventually became the company’s largest and most fully realized town.<sup>7</sup> The streets of Stonega were laid out along the lines of the hillsides on each side of Callahan’s Creek and the railroad track that paralleled it. The miners’ houses fronted on a dirt road and the railroad tracks. The commissary, recreational facilities, and church were grouped together near an impressive

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group of houses occupied by the management. In 1897, about 1,200 people lived near 350 coke ovens reducing coal into valuable industrial fuel and producing huge amounts of smoke and dust. Newspaper accounts from the period describe “comfortable and convenient” houses “much above the average of mining towns.” The one-story, four-room, dwellings that were provided for the miners were “sprinkled on hillsides.” Black workers were housed in a less attractive, segregated area.<sup>8</sup> Mines, as was the pattern, were located at the head of the hollow and were easily accessible by the miners. Mine railways emptied their contents into a tippie, which dumped the sorted coal into standard rail cars downhill.

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<sup>5</sup> U.S. census

<sup>6</sup> Shifflett 35

<sup>7</sup> Heritage 22

<sup>8</sup> Shifflett 37-38

The Stonega Coke and Coal Company was incorporated under New Jersey law in 1902. This company leased the lands and facilities of the Virginia Coal and Iron Company and became the most significant founder of company towns in Southwestern Virginia. Their existing camp at Stonega was followed by Osaka (1902), Roda (1903), and Arno (1908). Each eventually had a church, commissary, theater, playground, school, bath house, and boarding house.<sup>9</sup>

The Stonega company was not only one of the principal employers of coal miners in Virginia, but its size and volume allowed to provide some of the best facilities and pay. It appears that the firm took the lead among coal companies in laying out its camps with worker contentment in mind. The company provided a hospital at Stonega from its founding in 1902. Local work forces were unable to keep up with the booming coal industry. Agents traveled the south looking for black workers and the immigrant centers of the north looking for foreign-born potential employees. Current employees were also able to move more easily from company to company than has sometimes been thought.<sup>10</sup> The various mining companies had to compete for workers and neat coal towns and comfortable housing was a factor in winning them. While most workers were white southerners, a significant, but variable percentage of the workers were black and of European origin, particularly Hungarian and Italian at the Stonega camps.<sup>11</sup> Foreign-born workers began to fade in numbers after the end of the First World War.

Due to the restricted sites available at most coal camps, closely spaced lines of a repeated design made the most economic sense. Most of the early houses at Stonega were of one-story and housed a miner's family in four rooms. Most houses at Stonega were of board and batten, with a two-story, four-bay front with two doors and a porch across the front. A shed-roofed section across the rear held a kitchen for each dwelling unit. The houses were located in unbroken, curving rows along the road and railroad. Each house had a small front and rear yard surrounded

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by plank fences and numerous small outbuildings, including small coal houses for the coal provided for heating purposes in the fireplaces in each house. An historic photo shows the central section of the colliery looking east toward the coke ovens near the end of the period (ca. 1920).<sup>12</sup>

The character of the surviving buildings at Stonega perpetuate the perception among contemporary observers that most company towns were just series of compressed dwellings with

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<sup>9</sup> Heritage 22

<sup>10</sup> Shifflett 67-79

<sup>11</sup> [Heritage 95 and Shifflett 67-80]

<sup>12</sup> Heritage 95

a weak social structure.<sup>13</sup> Research however, indicates that the miners and their families developed a rich and complete life, including sport, mostly revolving around church, baseball, active schools, and group social and family activities. Toward the end of the period, the companies added other elements to the social mix of the towns, including movie theaters. In keeping with period mores throughout much of the U.S., each camp was divided into different ethnic or racial sections, including black sections and sectors housing Italian or Hungarian workers and areas were provided for the management and professional employees of the individual camps.

The Stonega Company promoted separate church facilities for black and white worshippers. They provided lots and often provided some building costs for churches. Miners would typically form a congregation and agree with the company to hold some of their income to pay a minister, supplemented by the company. The company agreed to pay part of salaries of a Presbyterian pastor and a Catholic priest in 1904. In 1906 the company paid out \$1,200 toward a parsonage for the Catholic congregation and conveyed a lot to the Catholic bishop for a church. A Baptist/Methodist union church and a "colored" church were built with 50% of the construction monies provided by the company.<sup>14</sup>

A hierarchy of housing was provided at the collieries according to race and rank, with black miners marginalized to the edges and upper ends of camps, where often the dust, smoke, and noise made the area less desirable. Foreign workers were looked down on by native whites, but were able to use the same facilities. As the period of Jin Crow continued, Stonega provided separate schools, churches, and even entertainment facilities for blacks. When the Stonega Commissary burned in 1915, its replacement incorporated a refreshment parlor separated into two compartments, "one for white patrons, the other for colored."<sup>15</sup> Company-sponsored rescue teams and the popular company baseball teams were all racially segregated as prescribed by Virginia law.

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Stonega achieved its near-final form before the First World War. Memories of Stonega residents who grew up in Stonega and remain there today are mixed. Some remember the past at Stonega positively, where the company took good care of the houses and provided a complete environment for family life. During its heyday in the second quarter of the twentieth century, as current residents recall, Stonega was laid out in several sections, each with a name. One of the

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<sup>13</sup> Shifflett 174

<sup>14</sup> Shifflett 190-194

<sup>15</sup> Shifflett 64

principal environmental features of the town was the central range of coke furnaces below the mines, located midway in the settled portion of the town. These lined the road and railroad track and consisted of ovens between the road and track and of bank ovens placed in the slope on the northwest side of the road [Paul Hylton]. The ovens burned with a smoky glow twenty-four hours a day. Smoke and wind patterns and needs for access for effective supervision dictated the placing of the management housing just below the coke furnaces. Black employees, who were, at least in the later periods, almost exclusively employed in the coke furnaces, were housed just uphill from the furnaces, where the smoke and dirt were probably at their worst.<sup>16</sup>

The section set aside for most black employees consisted of two areas, Red Row and Possumtrot Hollow. Red Row is located along the road above the furnaces and Possumtrot Hollow, no longer visible, stood along narrow roads in the hollows of the mountain to the immediate north. The company provided a community building that housed, according to oral history, the colored school, a dance hall, and later a church. Two churches, Baptist and Methodist, were available. A further section, the "Upper End," now gone, was, by the 1930s, the home of both black and white families.

The mines themselves were found up a hollow to the east of the coke furnaces. Most of the work-related buildings were located near the railroad west of the mines. A large wooden tipple loaded the coal into the railroad cars. The supply warehouse was nearby, while the frame carpenter shop, where the workmen could produce anything needed in the building of the mines or the company houses, burned several years ago.

The central nexus of the camp, located just below, and, due to a spur of mountain, out of sight, of the coke ovens. Here were found the main company institutions and the homes of its managers. A broad flat area was lined by large single and double frame houses of stylish Queen Anne-style design. It was nicely landscaped and known as "the Park". It was overlooked from the slope above, by the domestic-scaled frame Stonega Hospital, which was set in a fenced and landscaped yard. The single houses on the northeast side of the park, housed the families of two principal doctors (for many years Doctors Burton and Foster held those posts) and the superintendent of the colliery (Charles Slaughter is particularly remembered in that role). On the opposite side of the

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street stood double houses occupied by such officials as the Payroll Officer, the General Mine Foremen, and the Supply Manager. Immediately to the east on the north side of the road, stood the Stonega Methodist Church and the gable-fronted Stonega House Hotel. While most of the large houses still stand, the hotel and church are gone.

Just across the railroad track, in a line on the south side of the road stood the public buildings in

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<sup>16</sup> Paul Hylton

a row from west to east: the post office/doctor's office, the company store, and the theater. The large frame company store contained on the second floor the payroll office and other colliery offices. Continuing the line of buildings to the west was a tightly spaced line of double frame houses known as "Quality Row," where middle management families lived two to a building. Most of these houses survive exhibiting widely varying degrees of integrity. Each half house was offered for sale by the company in about 1960 and many remain in divided ownership.

A wider flat section of bottomland across Callahan's Creek was lined with two rows of smaller double houses. Known as "Hunktown," this was where foreign workers, including Italians and Hungarians, were housed. Of the approximately twenty buildings that stood there, only five remain today. A large Roman Catholic church was built at the end of this row to serve the foreign workers, supplemented by a substantial rectory (no longer standing) next door. As the foreign population dwindled in later years, the building was turned over to the Baptists as early as the mid-1930s.

A section of double houses, occupied by miners and known as Canal Road was found on the opposite side of the road and creek from the Catholic church. Most of these are now gone. A further section of houses assigned to miners non-ethnic white miners extended along the road for a half mile to the southwest and downstream. This section, know as "the Lower End," was completely demolished before the double houses were offered to the occupants for sale by the company.

A further section one-story, weatherboarded, single-family houses was built even farther to the southwest in about 1914. The company made changes in the design of the houses as changing living standards made single houses more desirable for some miner families. Known as Midway, this section required many miners to walk more than a mile to work, but was equipped with indoor plumbing and plaster walls.<sup>17</sup>

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### *Modern Company Towns (1917-1952)*

Stonega continued as the main town of the Stonega Coke and Coal Company. At the beginning of this period Stonega's population stood at 2,470 in 456 families. 500 persons were black. In 1916, the company added a theater at Stonega. Officials had begun converting buildings for use as theaters and had observed in the previous year that "people living at the plants where we have built theaters and equipped them with moving picture apparatus have appreciated them."<sup>18</sup> The

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<sup>17</sup> Paul Hylton

<sup>18</sup> Shifflett 169



town had a Roman Catholic church with two resident priests, white and black Baptist and Methodist churches, and a white Presbyterian church by this time. The large black population at Stonega had a strong community life- the company even supported emancipation day celebrations organized by the Mt. Olive Church.

Union-organizing occurred for the most part in other parts of the Southern Appalachian coal fields. Conflicts between Wise County labor and management avoided much of the violence that characterized the West Virginia region sporadically from 1912 until the 1930s. The Stonega Coal and Coke Company's consistent paternalistic policies from 1902 on created a significant reservoir of good will for the company that made it difficult for organizers to create a successful strike, in spite of the extraordinary productivity and efficiency of the Stonega mines. The mining company produced more coal in 1921 than 75% of its competition in Virginia.<sup>19</sup> Unlike in the West Virginia coal fields, the 1920s were quiet in Wise County.<sup>20</sup>

Recognizing the need to provide a positive environment for workers in the light of labor conflicts before and labor shortages during the First World War, the Stonega company articulated its policies in its annual report of 1916 under the progressive-sounding term "contentment sociology," derived from social theory of the period. "Contentment is necessary for the stability of labor and prevention of unions and lockouts. Playgrounds, amusement halls, night schools, and domestic science classes have been carefully worked out for the benefit and contentment of the employee and his family. Again, the Church, for the first time, is strongly represented at all the collieries, it being such that each denomination has sent to the Company one or more of their strongest pastors."<sup>21</sup>

Health care was presented by the company as an issue of the greatest importance. Compressing relatively large populations in tight quarters created health problems similar to those faced in cities, drawing management's attention to improved methods of garbage collection, waste disposal, water supplies, management of animals, and control of infectious diseases. Stonega's annual reports for 1915 and 1916 emphasized the need for bathhouses where miners could wash off coal dirt before going home.<sup>22</sup> The company provided a bathhouse at Stonega, but a large and modern new bathhouse was built there in about 1938. The company provided medicine, doctor's visits, and hospital care to all workers and their families free of charge.<sup>23</sup>

The new standards, designed to maximize worker contentment, were carefully applied when the Stonega Coal and Coke Company decided, in 1918 to build new collieries at Exeter and Dunbar. At Dunbar, not far from Stonega, the company laid out a new town with 250 new dwellings for

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<sup>19</sup> Polly 1

<sup>20</sup> Shifflett 134-5

<sup>21</sup> Shifflett 54

<sup>22</sup> Shifflett 56-57

<sup>23</sup> Paul Hylton

individual families. A sketch made clear, however, that there was insufficient room for so many single dwellings, so the company used ten-room, duplex houses. The frame dwellings stood on brick piers, were plastered, wired, and equipped with fireplaces for heat.<sup>24</sup> The company gradually provided these amenities to some portions of the colliery at Stonega, but it never achieved the water and sewer conditions available at Derby or some of the other modern towns. Stonega was not, however, seen as a less favorable place to live.<sup>25</sup>

Like the other towns in the region, the mines were located near the top of the narrow hollow or valley. The coal was brought out of the mines on small rail cars and delivered to a tippie, through which the coal was loaded into conventional coal trains cars on a branch rail line just below. The railroad moved downhill through the middle of the camp, frequently crossed by the main road and crossing the creek as dictated by geography, to the mouth of the hollow, where it joined lines from the other camps and mines.

Stonega Coke and Coal used a variety of methods to protect the company and its workers during the Great Depression. No employees were hired in 1931, and in the following year wages were cut twelve per cent and some collieries were reduced or closed, while men were laid off at all the mines. No workers were laid off at Stonega, while 232 were laid off in less important camps, some of which were completely closed. The Depression also signaled changes in the nature of the coal camp. Better road meant that more workers were commuting from small farms or from homes in the closed camps, resulting in a breakdown in the insularity of the coal towns. The Depression resulted in what one writer describes as “a return of miners to greater reliance upon rural traditions of mutual aid” including vegetable gardens and covered dish suppers. The oversupply of workers removed the principal impetus for the company’s paternalism, which survived chiefly as a means of helping employees weather the hard times.<sup>26</sup>

Union organizers arrived in Wise County in 1933, but any miners who promoted unionization were quickly removed from their jobs and evicted from their homes, including twenty-two men in Derby. Workers struck and limited violence erupted, although pay was improved as much as 15 per cent.

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The company gave in to pressure from the Roosevelt administration and signed the Appalachian Agreement. This gave the miners the right to join the union and pay guarantees of \$4.20 per day. Fired employees were rehired. Union membership became compulsory in 1938.<sup>27</sup>

Mechanization made gradual changes in the coal fields and the life in the camps. Most

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<sup>24</sup> Shifflett 45

<sup>25</sup> Paul Hylton

<sup>26</sup> Shifflett 200-203

<sup>27</sup> Polly 13-26

companies introduced machines for undercutting the coal seam by the 1920s. Stonega fully eliminated mules teams for hauling coal in 1930 and in the 1945 switched from hand loading coal to mobile loaders or conveyors at Derby. Finally a single machine that could cut and load the coal, fully mechanizing the mining operation, was brought to the region in the early 1950s. In 1952, the company reported that the mines at Derby were 75 per cent mechanized. Most telling, the three new mines opened by the company and fully mechanized, were staffed by commuting miners, many of whom undoubtedly lived at Stonega.<sup>28</sup>

The results of mechanization were not propitious for the workers. According to mine historian Crandall A. Shifflett, employment among whites dropped seventy-five per cent and among blacks by ninety per cent. It brought increased danger, levels of dust, specialization and routinization of work, and a corresponding lessening of fraternal contact. Until about 1930 miners "were skilled craftsmen who worked independently" and afterwards were increasingly organized into crews around the machinery."<sup>29</sup>

Improvement in the miners lives and working conditions continued and new facilities were designed to serve their needs and those of the company. A brick building, still standing and constructed in the 1930s, housed the supply center, while the frame carpenter shop, where the workmen could produce anything needed in the building of the mines or the company houses, burned several years ago. One of the most interesting survivals is the Bath House of ca. 1938, which replaced an earlier bath house near the mine entrance. This large structure was consisted of a high-ceilinged central section flanked on the long sides by shed-roofed wings. The central section was divided by brick partitions into several large changing rooms, each with a toilet and shower room in the lower side wings. The high ceilinged changing rooms were equipped with a system of metal bars and pulleys attached to wooden benches on the floor. Each room was effectively lit by glass block windows in the lower walls and the clerestory.

Each miner would enter, and, unlocking a wire attached to individual pulley, would lower a small rack containing his work clothes from near the ceiling. He would then change and raise his clean clothes and other possessions to the ceiling and lock them up. On returning from work, he would remove the dirty clothes, leave, them on the bench, take a shower, and then replace his clean

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clothes as before. The heat from the large boiler would fill the entire space, drying wet clothing and towels. The workers complained the exposed steel ceiling structure and racks dripped cold condensed water so the management added a corrugated metal ceiling. Two entrances in the east ends of the wings give access to small foyers containing bulletin boards where miners were notified of current information. A smaller changing room was allotted to the black workers, who entered by a separate door to the rear. An even smaller, but identical set of rooms was allotted

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<sup>28</sup> Shifflett 203-205

<sup>29</sup> Shifflett 205

to the foremen and other supervisory personnel, while the large boiler, storage tank, and the brick smokestack are found in the western end of the building.<sup>30</sup>

A period of labor shortage during the Second World War, but ended with the war. Maintenance and other living standards at the coal camps did not keep up with regional and national trends, but the company had built up large store of good will among the residents. A Stonega Coke and Coal Company-sponsored survey in 1952 revealed that a majority of company employees retained good will for the company and felt that the coal camps were a good place to live. Residents of the town of Stonega complained about the flooring, ceiling, and size of their dwellings. The respondents showed a "rational, independent, self-interested position" between the union and the management and their answers indicated that they had embraced modern consumer society.<sup>31</sup>

### *Decay and Privatization (1952-Present)*

The post-war period saw, at first, the continuation of the company town and its tightly hierarchical structure. As the industrial operations changed fewer employees were needed from outside the community so that, at first, little changed in the coal camps. The housing from the earliest days of the Stonega Coke and Coal Company continued to serve most of the worker population, although these were gradually modernized, with plumbing and telephones and with rear additions to accommodate family needs.

By the 1960s, however, hundreds of thousands of miners had left the coal fields and the coal camps were obsolete. Many buildings at Stonega, Osaka, Arno, and Roda stood vacant [Shifflett 210]. As functions ended with the closing of the Stonega mines in 1952, the company abandoned its paternalistic enterprises there. Similar changes occurred at Derby. The theater, hotel, and store at both Derby and Stonega were demolished, as were those at Derby. The Colored School Building survived in the upper end of Stonega, as did the white schoolhouse at Derby, which was acquired by the Derby Methodist Church.

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By 1960, the company demolished entire sections of substandard or unused housing, but offered many dwellings to the occupants at moderate prices. Many chose to purchase their homes and continued living there, working in other mines or retiring as age dictated. Few new buildings were added to the camps, but many owners chose to alter their property in ways the company would have refused to allow in previous years. Many houses received distinguishing storm doors, siding and roofing color and material, and porch alterations.

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<sup>30</sup> Paul Hylton

<sup>31</sup> Shifflett 155

As time went by, most houses suffered from other alterations that changed their appearance more drastically, including the replacement of window sashes and doors to achieve a cost savings in energy consumption. The Roman Catholic and Colored Baptist churches at Stonega have suffered from the addition of siding and other alterations. Some houses at both camps and the Colored School at Stonega have suffered from decay or abandonment. New houses or trailers were added on some tracts in the district, but neither their presence nor the few missing or decayed houses seriously detracts from the cohesion and density of the main sections of the district. Of the more serious losses in recent decades, the Catholic Rectory is perhaps the most unfortunate. One of the principal problems in the camp is substandard sewer service, which discourages investment in the houses.

Today, residents in Stonega have organized a committee to encourage preservation of the camp by listing it in the National Register of Historic Places and by soliciting government funding for improved sewers and other amenities. The community has fared better than many other Stonega Coke and Coal Company camps. The stalwart form of the church anchors the community. Most of the houses are occupied and in good repair, with the exception of the vulnerable houses and community buildings in Red Row. The landscape retains, for the most part, the neat appearance of the original as preserved in historic photographs.

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### **Boundary Description**

Boundaries for the proposed historic district correspond to the boundaries drawn on the attached map.

### **Boundary Justification**

The boundaries were selected to include all structures that contribute to the historic character of the district, and to exclude areas of visual change in the post-1946 era.

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### Photographs

All photographs are of :

The Stonega Historic District, Wise County, Virginia

Photographer: Richard Worsham

Date of photograph: March 2002

Location of negative: Virginia Department of Historic Resources

1. VIEW OF:

Stonega Road looking northeast through  
"Red Row"

PHOTO 1 of 10

7. VIEW OF:

PHOTO 7 of 10

2. VIEW OF:

Stonega Road looking east along "Quality Row"  
PHOTO 2 of 10

8. VIEW OF:

PHOTO 8 of 10

3. VIEW OF:

Cross Creek Road looking east at "Hunktown"  
Black Section  
PHOTO 3 of 10

9. VIEW OF:

PHOTO 9 of 10

4. VIEW OF:

10. VIEW OF:



1800 block of Derby Road looking northwest  
at "The Park"

PHOTO 4 of 10

PHOTO 10 of 10

5. VIEW OF:

Roman Catholic Church from the northeast

PHOTO 5 of 10

6. VIEW OF :

PHOTO 6 of 10